



2024 Influencer **The Summit** ***Hazel Harrison***



Hazel grew up on a small farm in Charlotte County, Virginia. She was the oldest of six children and spent most of her time at home helping take care of her younger siblings, working hard in school, and going to church on Sundays. She had a very independent spirit and needed to reach beyond the rural life in which she was raised. On a January day during her high school senior year, a government recruiter came to speak to the senior class. Three months later, she was notified to report to the Central Intelligence Agency as a potential stenographer. Hazel was influenced in her early career by older colleagues who gave her many tips on how to dress and present herself professionally.

In the 1960s, Hazel was given an assignment in Europe. This gave her the opportunity to visit all the European countries either by train or bus. While there, she also studied accounting at the European Division of the University of Maryland and took German language classes. Shortly after returning to the states, she met and married George, who attended her church. In the 1980s, Hazel was assigned to the South Pacific.

On her fiftieth birthday in 1989, Hazel retired after thirty-two years working in federal assignments. She entered retirement by enrolling as a full-time student at Longwood University. She graduated Magna Cum Laude as the oldest graduate in the class of '93. For six years after that, she taught GED prep classes to people across various counties of Virginia. Hazel served on the Board of the Virginia Baptist Children's Home and Family Services in Salem for thirty years. She and her husband

built a six-bedroom home for disabled men in Farmville and turned the building over to VBCH&FS to manage. Hazel also helped start Tri-County Life Learners where she organized and taught classes to eradicate illiteracy in the area. Hazel always helped distribute food at the local food bank on Saturdays.

In 2010, Hazel and George moved to The Summit where she has continued to work hard to support her community. Hazel organized a group called "Bears, Balls, and Braces" in which she worked with other residents to send stuffed toys and neck braces to the Lynchburg General Hospital. She estimates that they have sent around 45,000 pieces to the hospital. At The Summit, she served as President of the Resident Council and Treasurer for many years. She also led the Spiritual Life Committee and has served as chair of the Library Committee, keeping track of and managing around 1,800 books for the residents.

Currently, Hazel is known to help any resident or team member with clothing alterations or jewelry repairs. She also calls Bingo and sings in The Summit Choir. In the next year, Hazel hopes to stay healthy and always project herself as a Christian who makes the right decisions. "My prescription for a happy and fulfilled life is to continue your education. Don't get derailed. Be the first to volunteer to give your time."